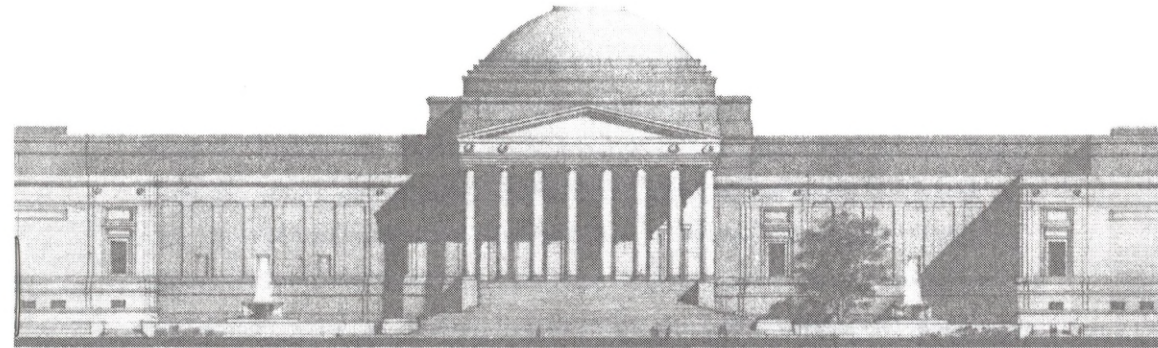


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Music Department
National Gallery of Art
Sixth Street and Constitution Avenue NW
Washington, DC

www.nga.gov

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The Seventy-second Season of
The William Nelson Cromwell and F. Lamot Belin
Concerts

National Gallery of Art
2,998th Concert

Edvinas Minkstimas, pianist

May 14, 2014
Wednesday, 6:30 pm
West Building, West Garden Court

Admission free

Program

Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart (1756–1791)

Sonata in C Major, K. 545

Mikalojus Konstantinas Čiurlionis (1875–1911)

Three Preludes on One Theme in B-flat Minor, VL 270–272 (1905)

Franz Liszt (1811–1886)

Réminiscences de Robert le diable: Valse infernale

Transcription for piano (after Meyerbeer), S. 413 (LW A78)

Edvinas Minkstimas (b. 1980)

*Variations on “Dos Elnte Kind,” a theme written in the
Vilna Ghetto during the Holocaust*

George Gershwin (1898–1937)

Three Preludes

Allegro ben ritmato e deciso

Andante con moto e poco rubato

Agitato

Vince Guaraldi (1928–1976)

Selections from *Charlie Brown*

Linus and Lucy

Ice Skating

The Musician

Widely regarded as one of Central Europe’s emerging young pianists, Edvinas Minkstimas has brought his extensive repertory, solid technique, and wide range of musical expression to concert venues throughout Europe and North America. Recent performances include a concert at the National Gallery in 2013, in which he played Beethoven’s *Piano Concerto no. 2* with the National Gallery of Art Chamber Players and the Phillips Camerata and recitals at the 2013 Mozart-Schubert Festival, hosted by the Austrian Embassy in Washington and produced by the Embassy Series. He has also appeared as a guest soloist with the Fairfax Symphony Orchestra, playing Mozart’s *Piano Concerto no. 17 in G Major*. Upcoming performances include chamber and solo performances at Carnegie Hall and concert tours in Europe and South America.

In 2011 Minkstimas received the doctor of musical arts degree from the Juilliard School of Music, where he studied with Jerome Lowenthal. He previously received the artist diploma from the Paris Conservatory under the tutelage of Michel Béroff and studied in Lithuania with Veronika Vitaite. In 2010 Minkstimas won the Belz-Parker Young Artist Award in Memphis, and in 2007 received first prize at the Fifth International Čiurlionis Piano Competition in Vilnius, Lithuania. Since 2012 he has served as a member of the jury and board of directors of the Salzburg Festival and a board member of Mahler Philharmoniker in Vienna, Austria.

A native of Kaunas, Lithuania, Minkstimas counts among his early artistic influences Baltic mythology, Nordic poetry, and romantic imagery. His goal of conveying the lyricism and poetry within a musical work through displays of virtuoso technique has been strongly influenced by pianists Sviatoslav Richter (1915–1997) and Arturo Benedetti Michelangeli (1920–1995), and composers Brahms, Liszt, Rachmaninoff, Ravel, Ligeti, and Penderecki. Minkstimas has released two recordings, featuring solo and orchestral performances of works by Beethoven, Brahms, and Liszt. A Steinway artist since 2013, he gives regular public master classes at the Steinway showroom and concert hall in North Bethesda, Maryland. He maintains a web site at www.minkstimas.com.

Program Notes

As it did in May 2012, the National Gallery of Art joins the Delegation of the European Union to the United States and numerous other concert presenters in the Washington, DC area in celebrating the “European Month of Culture.” In addition to nearly forty concerts, the festival features spotlight tours at area museums, dance, lectures, films, workshops, and special exhibitions throughout the month. In today’s concert, Edvinas Minkstimas represents Lithuania by programming his own music as well as that of fellow Lithuanian composer Mikalojus Konstantinas Čiurlionis. The Gallery will also host the concerts that spotlight performers and composers from Belgium, Germany, Greece, and Ireland. In addition, the Gallery’s resident chamber players will perform music by composers from Bulgaria, the Czech Republic, Malta, and Slovenia on May 28.

Mozart called his *Sonata*, K. 545 “Eine kleine Klavier-Sonate für Anfänger” (A little clavier sonata for beginners) when he entered the theme in the catalogue of his works on June 26, 1788. The exact circumstances of the composition are not known, but it was added to his catalogue on the same date as his *Symphony no. 39*. Usually known as the “sonata facile,” the work is generally considered easy to play, but it nevertheless reflects the high standards Mozart maintained when writing for students. The third movement, a Rondo, is perhaps the most child-like, and the innocently graceful G major Andante is based on a resourceful use of Alberti patterns (repeated arpeggiated harmonies). Despite its apparent simplicity this movement shows a surprising depth of emotion, especially when the second episode turns to the minor key.

Lithuanian artist and composer Mikalojus Konstantinas Čiurlionis, a unique figure in the history of European arts, has left a profound imprint on Lithuanian culture. Judging by the breadth of his artistic activities and diverse interests, Čiurlionis can be seen as a truly Renaissance individual. Over a short career, he composed nearly four hundred works, including two large-scale symphonic poems, an overture, two piano sonatas, a string quartet, and a cantata for chorus and orchestra. During those same brief years he also created approximately four hundred paintings and etchings as well as

several literary works and poems, while still finding time to experiment with art photography. His active involvement in the Lithuanian national movement and his self-sacrifice for the sake of artistic ideals show him as a typical artist of the romantic mold. He was the first Lithuanian professional composer not only to take interest in Lithuanian folk songs, but to collect and publish them. His musical output is divided into two periods—early (1896–1903), and late (1904–1910). In the later, mature period, he leaned towards modernism. Regrettably, the precise number of his compositions is not known, because a substantial number of his manuscripts were lost or destroyed in World War II.

Robert le diable, Giacomo Meyerbeer’s (1791–1864) retelling of the Faust legend, was one of the most successful and widely produced operas of the first half of the nineteenth century. It preceded Berlioz’ *Damnation of Faust* by fifteen years, and Gounod’s *Faust* by twenty-eight. Its popularity in many countries exceeded that of celebrated operas by Rossini and Weber. Meyerbeer defined the genre of French grand opera with this work. Following Wagner’s virulent anti-Semitic personal attack on Meyerbeer in the 1869 edition of his essay “Das Judenthum in der Musik,” and the Nazi performance ban on the music of all composers of Jewish ancestry in the 1930s and 1940s, Meyerbeer’s operas virtually disappeared from the active repertoire.

Testimony to the popularity of *Robert le diable* in the nineteenth century can be found in the fact that excerpts from it were transcribed into great piano fantasies and widely performed by many of the leading piano virtuosi of the day. None of these transcriptions can compare, however, with the monumental piano fantasy by Franz Liszt, based on the “Valse infernale” (Infernal Waltz) taken from the third act of Meyerbeer’s opera, where it is titled “Coro infernale” (Infernal Chorus) and is performed by chorus and orchestra. Meyerbeer’s original is considerably shorter than Liszt’s fantasy, which incorporates a number of additional themes from the opera.

Few pianists after Liszt have dared to play this fearsome work in public. Although Liszt’s work is, technically speaking, extraordinarily difficult to play on the piano, it is not a virtuoso piano piece per se. The difficulties in performing this work do not lie in keyboard acrobatics or filigree, but in its

orchestral writing. The premiere performance on March 27, 1841, created a furor. At a subsequent fundraising concert on April 25, with Berlioz in command of the orchestra and Liszt the featured soloist, a clamorous audience refused to allow the program to proceed until Liszt at last consented to perform the *Valse infernale*.

Based on a theme written in the Vilna Jewish Ghetto during World War II—fittingly called “Lonely Child”—*Dos Elnte Kind* is a set of variations for piano solo that I have also set for piano and voice. I sought to explore the emotional world of this song in great depth—to reflect the anguish, melancholy and loneliness, as well as a glimmer of hope. The cycle follows an arch-structure, centered around the theme song in its simplest appearance. It was performed for the first time in September 2011 at the Embassy of Lithuania in Washington, in commemoration of the Holocaust perpetrated in Lithuania during World War II.

When the blues and jazz first became popular in the early years of the twentieth century, George Gershwin was the composer who brought this music into the concert hall with his performance of his popular composition *Rhapsody in Blue*. He was one of several serious composers who used jazz and blues to enhance their work, blurring the line between classical and jazz. In the March 1925 issue of *Vanity Fair*, Harlem Renaissance patron Carl Van Vechten alleged that Gershwin was working on twenty-four preludes for solo piano after the models of Bach and Chopin, to be part of a collection titled *The Melting Pot*. The collection never materialized, and Gershwin published just three in the keys B-flat major, C-sharp minor, and E-flat minor. In 1926 the composer premiered *Three Preludes* at the Hotel Roosevelt in New York City, and he recorded them in London in 1928.

The first prelude, *Allegro ben ritmato e deciso*, is based on a five-note blues motif. Flattened sevenths give the piece a strong jazz feel. The second, *Andante con moto e poco rubato*, is by Gershwin’s own description “a sort of blues lullaby.” It starts slowly, with a steady bass line. The third prelude, *Agitato*, also known as “Spanish Prelude,” is a brief but exciting blend of rugged jazz rhythms and syncopations. Since their publication, the preludes have been arranged for various ensemble combinations. Most notably, at a

Gershwin memorial concert, Otto Klemperer led the Los Angeles Philharmonic in his arrangement of the second prelude. Violinist Jascha Heifetz transcribed all three preludes for violin and piano and promoted them heavily in his concert tours.

A jazz musician and pianist noted for his innovative compositions and arrangements, Vince Guaraldi was a nephew of musician, singer, and whistler Muzzy Marcellino. Guaraldi graduated from San Francisco’s Lincoln High School, attended San Francisco State University, and served as an Army cook in the Korean War.

In 1965, while searching for just the right music to accompany a planned *Peanuts* Christmas special, producer Lee Mendelson heard the Vince Guaraldi Trio playing “Cast Your Fate to the Wind” while traveling in a taxicab on the Golden Gate Bridge. He contacted Guaraldi and proposed that he write the music for the upcoming television special. Guaraldi enthusiastically took the job, creating what later became “Linus and Lucy.” The soundtrack was recorded by the Vince Guaraldi Trio, and the composer went on to write scores for seventeen *Peanuts* television specials, plus the feature film *A Boy Named Charlie Brown*.

Program notes by Edvinas Minkstimas